

#543 November 17, 1978

## *In Himonya Church BEAUTIFUL FEET*

Every fall, many city churches in Japan plan bazaars which not only bring in funds for the church and its mission work, but also build relationships with the neighborhood community by opening the church doors to many people in a friendly atmosphere. This is also the time for church schools and church kindergartens to take trips and to enjoy a field day. In the prevailing non-Christian culture every such opportunity is a chance for setting up a situation for mission.

For their fall evangelism program, the Himonya church (Kyodan) in Tokyo planned a special service of witness with four testimonies by church members, and extended an invitation to many neighborhood people to join in the church fellowship. The following is a translation of a testimony by Ms. KOSHIBA Motoko, which illustrates the mission of the church and its effect upon her life and faith:

A healthy person thinks that walking is a natural movement, but for me, it is a mystery. I could not walk until I was 13 years old, but now I take buses, trains and even climb long flights of stairs. For me, walking has become a source of overwhelming joy and appreciation, for I am crippled. I was born with brain paralysis. Some people with a Buddhist interpretation of life troubled my parents by saying that my birth was caused by their sinfulness in the past. But when my niece asked me why I had such a sickness, I told her that I was born dead. Then the child replied, "Auntie--you are like Jesus, because you have risen from the dead!"

When I was 16 the war ended. Since I could no longer go to school (my mother had carried me on her back for many years), I stayed home and read books every day searching for the meaning of life. At that time my younger sister died of tubercular meningitis. The people around me said, "Why did such a beautiful child have to die and the helpless handicapped one remain alive?" I cried, because they expected me to die before anybody else. I wished that I were dead.

Many new religions invited me to join their religious activities, but I couldn't believe in them. Then one Sunday I saw some people come out of a church building with carnations

pinned to their lapels in honor of Mother's Day. It reminded me of the time when I was taken to church school when I was little. But during the war I was told by my public school teacher not to believe in the God of the Americans. When I saw the beautiful carnations I decided to go to the church one more time before killing myself. At the front gate everybody was so kind to me. The sermon was "Thou Shalt Not Kill," and the minister spoke about the most sinful act of killing oneself. I was so surprised, because I had not told the minister anything about myself, but it seemed that he knew of my decision to die. I realized that God was trying to speak to me, and had chosen me to be baptised. It was 1949.

Soon after that, my mother died, as if she was relieved to see my re-birth in Christ, and could rest at last. At the suggestion of the minister of the church, I was hospitalized for an operation. There I became aware of the many unhappy people in the world who need someone as I do. I decided to go to college and study social welfare to become a case worker for those people. During this time I had 34 operations on my hip bone, which developed cracks periodically. Every time I was

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Subscriptions: JAPAN ¥2,700; OVERSEAS Seamail \$10.00 Airmail Asia \$11.00 other \$12.00

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in the hospital bed after the operations I thanked God who gave me the experience of learning the pain and struggle of Christ on the cross. I do not come to the church for physical healing, but my task in the church is to build a community where other unhappy handicapped people can come and experience the spiritual salvation that I have experienced.

Although I have speech difficulties, God has used me as a school teacher for eight years. I have a job as a case worker visiting handicapped people at their homes. Moreover, I sincerely thank God that I am able to pray for others wherever I am. I go to PTA and other public meetings and talk about God's many blessings upon us. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel" (Romans 1:16). I'll walk on the road of life for others until I can receive the everlasting crown of thorns.##

#### THE CHURCH BETWEEN TEMPTATION & BLESSING

*Ever since 1969, Kyodan-centered issues have opened up questions about the mission of the church. Much confrontation and debate continues to this day. In the Sendai area, meetings related to the Kyodan and to Theological Education have been held nine times since July 1976 in order to form new traditions for the church in Japan. The following is a translated summary of an article on the mission of the church by MORINO Zenuemon of Tohoku Gakuin University delineating the meaning of the church in the present era. (Eds.)*

Early Protestant churches in Japan could be characterized as Bible-centered, pietistic, mission-oriented, and influenced by the revivalism and evangelism of 19th century American churches. The primary task of the church in that situation was evangelical mission. For churches of the present time who still believe that mission of this kind is the glorious standard for the church, Expo '70 was considered to be a great chance for mission, and discussion focused on the methods and plans for this evangelism. Those involved with this kind of church work labeled people who were against Christian participation in Expo '70 as lacking enthusiasm in mission.

From 1960 on this single-minded approach to mission has been challenged by the theology of Asian and African churches which looked for content in mission and for other meaning for the church. The decision for the Kyodan to participate in Expo '70 was not based on an adequate discussion of the mission of the church but rather was a decision that came out of church politics, and participation was justified as a form of involvement in the ecumenical movement, in communion with world churches. By way of contrast the present Kyodan is tackling basic issues related to the

nature of the church out of its Protestant backgrounds in Japan. This search for new directions for the Kyodan needs to be carried forward with continued perseverance.

Reformation of the church is to be sought from a position of autonomy in the sense of religion as separate from the State, and there is a need to focus on how this autonomy of the church can be fully attained. It is necessary for us to understand the Gospel as the message of God's salvation liberating people throughout history. In order to grasp the meaning of the Gospel it is also necessary to evaluate the meaning of the Bible and the meaning of the mission of the church and proclamation of the Gospel.

A Korean resident in Japan pointed out that Bible passages preferred by Japanese Christians are those from the Sermon on the Mount and the Letters of Paul. However, for Korean Christians, the preferred verses are those in Exodus describing God's liberation of the Israelites, since Koreans share an experience of liberation from Japanese imperialism and the emperor. This difference in preference not only indicates the different historical backgrounds of the two countries, but also the differences of understanding of the meaning of God's salvation, and variations in interpretations of Bible passages which then in turn effect qualitative differences in expression of the Christian faith.

For Koreans, oppression was an actual experience under Japanese colonial rule, and the Bible came to be interpreted as the Gospel of history as exemplified by the Israelite exodus from Egypt. John 3:16 is fondly read in Japanese churches and repeatedly preached about as evidence of God's love, the forgiveness of sins, and the redemption of Christ. But whenever the Gospel is preached without a specific historical reference it offers nothing more than a singular comfort to the individuals seeking salvation and does not create a faith for a living church seeking responsible action in history. What the Japanese churches need at the present time is the ability to see with keen eyes the reality of God's salvation at work in the connected incidents of our history. It is necessary to deepen our observation of historical incidents in relation to the experiences of the people in the Bible. Sermons without historical understanding only offer moralistic and pietistic teachings, and ignore the real situations of the people.

UCHIMURA Kanzo, a founder of the Mukyokai (non-church) movement, is understood by many to have understood God through actual

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historical events and one who respected these events as symbols of God's will. The events of history alone were not absolutized by Uchimura but through them he found real meaning. With this faith Uchimura stood up to be counted in his opposition to the emperor's divinity and to the Russo-Japanese war. For Uchimura, God was the universal beyond the State, and Christians were understood as individual persons existing within a transcendent absolute. Salvation was meant for the whole person and was also extended to salvation for society and the state.

Uchimura was followed by his disciple FUJII Takeshi, who expressed his love of country and confessed Japan's sinfulness in the following poem:

Soon the name of my beloved country  
will be wiped  
From the face of the earth.  
Perish, this soiled virgin nation,  
Spiritless young country!  
The beastly but small country which  
forgets to love the truth,  
Perish!  
Curse the people and the nation  
opposed to the Truth.  
Lord, we pray for your will to be done!

Although it is by no means perfect, the Kyodan "Confession of War Responsibility," adopted in 1967, is a meaningful document that expresses the Kyodan's responsibility for its own sinful history. Criticism of the confession has been made on the pretext of protecting the integrity of the Kyodan as a church. However, by making this confession, the Kyodan has a great opportunity to become a true Christian church. With this confession of our weakness and past faults we pray for God's mercy upon us in order that the church may truly become a "resurrected and living church." This is the time for the Kyodan to accept with appreciation the reality of being a church between temptation and blessing. ##

## RURAL CHURCH MISSION

A few years ago the average monthly income of Japanese ministers was about 70,000 yen, half of the average income for male Japanese. Over 80 percent of ministers depended on other non-church sources of income. Fifty percent operated church-related nurseries and kindergartens. The other half supported themselves with income from various other sources.

Rev. SHIMIZU Keizo provides the above information, gathered from visits to 58 rural churches from 1972 to 1977, in his newly published book *Henkyo no Kyokai* (Churches in Rural Areas), Kyodan Publishers, 241 pp. During his travels, Shimizu discovered Christian communities in remote villages from Hokkaido to Okinawa.

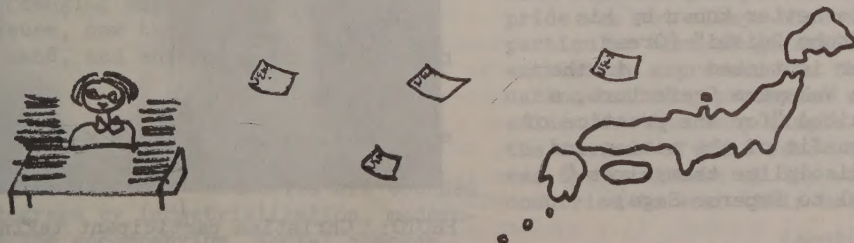
Shimizu emphasizes that the difficulties of mission work in olden times have not changed today. The mission of the church is to know and share in the problems of the people who are ministering in the rural areas and --in unique ways--plant new life in these communities. Their mission should be understood by taking the long view that their job is to build firm foundations in the local community, with the expectation that the next generation will build the church on that base.

Cooperation in rural mission does not merely mean that the larger churches give financial aid to the smaller churches. We also need to learn about the lives of people who are involved and struggling in Japanese society. Though the social structure is rigidly centralized and people's thought patterns tend to follow the traditional social organization, some self-actualizing persons motivated by the Gospel are building communities in the rural areas. In one area, about 30 church members are witnessing to the words of the Gospel by

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### PLEASE FILL OUR GAPS!

Did any JCAN reader notice the white space on page two of our last issue? This blank represents a need which you can fill by writing articles about what is happening in your particular corner of Japan. Japan Christian Activity News--Christian Activity News--Activity News--News. Thank you.





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living a life deeply rooted among the people in a village of less than 4000.

Through his experience Mr. Shimizu emphasizes the importance of the specific "place" where Christ's dominion is obvious through his rule in the lives of the people who live there. It is an escatological place but at the same time it is related to present reality.

During his trips visiting "neighbors" in the places which he calls the "holy land," he has experienced the power of nature in the deep-snow areas and during typhoons in Okinawa. The basic influential forces over people's lives, he concludes, are the promise of new life, and the cruel destructive power of nature. From this experience he states that what Christianity in Japan confronts, more than Buddhism or Shintoism, is the ideologies of indigenous religions connected with naturalism which permeate the lives and customs of the people.

After his visits to the "holy land" of 58 rural churches, Shimizu stresses that rural mission cannot be based solely on the latest and most fashionable ideas blowing in the wind, but must develop out of a recognition on the part of the larger society of a need for mission that has been implanted by the continued and lasting presence of a servant church.##

-Aiko CARTER

#### *Seminar on Japanese Religion* ESOTERIC BUDDHISM

The NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions from time to time sponsors seminars for missionaries and others who are interested in a further understanding of the Japanese religious and cultural world. Previous ones, for example, dealt with the Jodo Shinshu branch of Buddhism, with Rissho Kosei Kai, one of the new religions, and with Soka Gakkai, an off-spring of Nichiren Buddhism.

This year's seminar, from October 8-10, dealt with Esoteric Buddhism (Mikkyo), also known as Shingon Buddhism. Over 50 participants from many countries met together on Mount Kōya, the spiritual center of this branch of Buddhism.

The Mount Kōya center was founded in 816 A.D. by the monk Kukai, who had briefly studied in T'ang China and who is better known by his posthumous title of "Kobo Daishi" (Great Teacher). This center is tucked in the mountains of northern Wakayama Prefecture, a place away ideally suited "for the practice of meditation for the benefit of the nation and those who desire to discipline themselves." (from Kukai's memorial to Emperor Saga).

Since Esoteric Buddhism leans more towards

practice and rituals and less toward preaching and teaching, this year's program included attendance at a very colorful ritual, visits to a number of temples, including one to the founder's mausoleum (Okunoin), and to the headquarters of the sect, Kongubuji. As one wanders about the place one cannot help but notice in certain areas a rather mysterious atmosphere, with temples under tall cedars and graves lining the way to the mausoleum of the founder. In all there are about 100 monasteries on Mount Kōya. Many of them cater to pilgrims and tourists, who come all through the year, but especially in spring and summer. A particularly interesting feature is the four Shinto Shrines (Shisha-myōjin-sha). Here the Buddhist (!) monks of Mount Kōya since olden times have worshipped the tutelary goddess of the mountain and her son. In the course of time two other Shinto deities from other parts of the country have been added. There is also a Buddhist College where acolytes are trained not only in the arcane beliefs and practices of Esoteric Buddhism but also in sociology, philosophy, and English and Japanese literature.

An excellent museum (Reihōkan) houses many art treasures accumulated during the last thousand years or so. These include statues of the Buddha, scrolls, manuscripts,

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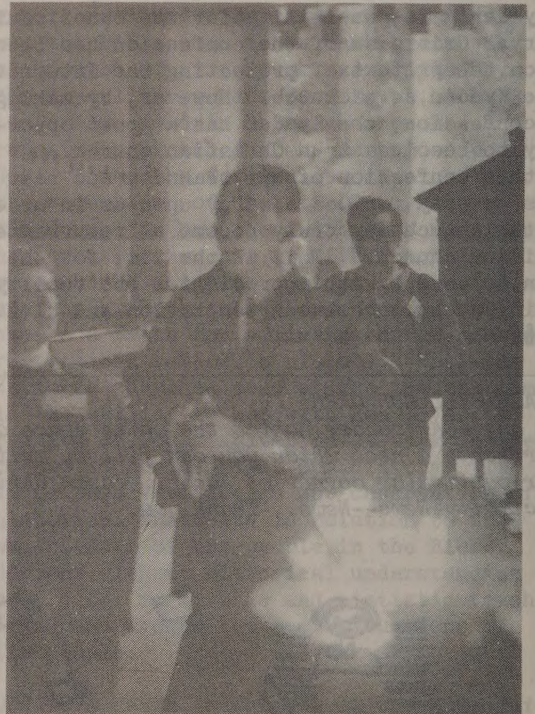


PHOTO: Christian participant taking a closer view of monk in prayer.



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mandalas (which are drawings of Shingon or Esoteric ideas designed to help people attain Buddhahood), and other minor objets d'art.

Another aspect of the program was the opportunity to participate in Buddhist worship and especially in lectures by two professors dealing with the thought and practice of Esoteric Buddhism and the world of Kōbō Daishi, who looms large in Japanese history as the first educator of common people and as the creator of a simplified script. He brought back from China the worship of the solar deity, the Buddha Vairocana, which emphasizes ceremonials, magic formulas, talismanic devices, and also the custom of services for the dead. The central doctrine in this system was that man can even in this present life attain Buddhahood (or salvation) since, essentially, all are part of the eternal, all-inclusive Buddha.

There also seem to be non-Buddhist influences, some would say perhaps even Christian influences, because Kukai probably had come in contact with Nestorian Christianity during his stay in China. As far as can be ascertained, however, no clearly Christian elements are part of the faith of this branch of Buddhism, though nothing can be said of those secret elements that are open only to the initiated.

In conclusion it can be said that such seminars not only provide valuable insights into another system of thought and belief, but also provide an excellent opportunity for an encounter with people whose lives have been moulded by such a system, and occasionally even an opportunity to correct some of the more glaring misconceptions concerning the Christian faith.##

-Alfred L. BOETTCHER

#### *Methodist Women's Seminar* ASIAN WOMEN GROWING TOGETHER

Four Kyodan women seized the opportunity presented by the World Federation of Methodist Women East Asia Area Seminar, held Oct. 3-7, at Christian Academy House in Seoul, Korea, to meet and draw closer to their Asian Christian sisters. Seventy Christian women leaders from eight Asian countries came together under the theme "Asian Women Living for Christ in the Rapidly Changing World." We listened, discussed issues, saw the church at work in Korea first hand, and engaged in times of rich fellowship.

We discovered how similar the problems to be faced in our own homes, churches, and communities are, as all our countries are touched in varying degrees by industrialization, modernization, and the accompanying social changes

(the emergence of the nuclear family, changing male-female family relationships and responsibilities, materialism, the population problem, women's education and participation in society, the problems of youth and the aging, etc.).

Those of us who came as delegates from a united church (not having denominational ties which provide regular opportunities to meet together with women of other countries) found ourselves overwhelmed by a number of lasting impressions:

1) We women from Japan were struck by the strength and aggressive leadership ability of the women in the delegations from other countries. Not only through their ability to adeptly communicate in English, but also through their active participation during the seminar and their reporting of women's activities in their own countries, we became aware of the striking contrast between the lives of these women and the role that most women play in Japanese society today.

2) In meeting a large number of Korean church women, serving in various capacities during the conference, we were impressed by the youthful efficiency and enthusiasm of the Korean church. This impression was confirmed through our participation in a Sunday worship service in a Seoul church.

3) Though our group from Japan enjoyed many times of deep sharing with delegates from each of the participating countries, there still seemed to be a special affinity and a more urgent need to share with our Korean sisters our mutual concerns in life and faith in the present. There was also the need to speak of events in the past, and to confess our guilt and seek forgiveness for the crimes of our country which were of our making. (Our freedom to communicate was in part because of the willingness of the Korean women to communicate in Japanese, this in itself being a symbol of their forgiveness for our part in that painful period of Korean history.)

4) A sense of national pride was a very conspicuous feature of each group represented, which perhaps was all the more noticeable to us because of its absence among most Japanese today. While this national pride was not always directly related to any particular form of government, still the enthusiasm expressed for their countries' nation-building processes was much in evidence. One very simple example during the seminar of this sense of national pride was the readiness of the women of other countries to wear their national clothes,

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in contrast to the great reluctance of the Japanese women to wear kimono.

5) As we participated in this international group of able, well-educated, middle-class church leaders, we sensed anew the insidious danger that the church always faces of becoming a meeting of the elite, who may so easily neglect the needs existing all around them in all societies.

6) As a result of participating in such a peak experience of growth and fellowship, as well as seeing the very real signs of growth and prosperity in Seoul, from the newly-built wide roads to the healthy, well-dressed people walking down them, one could easily gain the impression that all is well in this nation of energetic, attractively aggressive people. It is only in the small-group conversations or intimate talks with individual Christians that one is caught by the incredible struggles taking place in Korean society at large, as well as among Korean Christians. One sorrows for a nation that deprives itself of the strength of its most capable leadership by dismissing from the national assembly those members who voice opposition to the government. One mourns the loss of countless leaders in schools, labor organizations, and women's organizations who are not allowed to contribute to the momentous task of building a new nation.

After hearing the plight of many such Christian leaders, to say nothing of similar experiences in the everyday lives of the unknown faithful, one can only cry in anguish, "But what can we do?" To this question comes the clear answer, "Just don't forget us! Tell those you meet about Korea!" With full hearts we pledged ourselves to this task.

What then, do we do with all of these experiences? We asked the seminar's Korean chairperson what her hope was for the future as a result of the seminar. Her reply was, "We have to become better friends, to know each other's problems and thus strengthen one another." Perhaps the answer is in the phrase used by Dr. LEE Tai-Young, the remarkable woman lawyer and founder of the Korean Legal Aid Center: "Together With My Suffering Neighbor." As Japanese Christian women, perhaps our most urgent task is to move out beyond our comfortable, secure lives so that we might meet and share in the lives of our Asian Christian sisters. ##

-Carolyn FRANCIS

WOMEN'S LIB IS A NO-NO--The Ministry of Education recently rejected an ethics and social studies textbook proposed for use in public high schools because of three pages devoted to the women's liberation movement. The book, printed by Sanichi Publishing Company, includes three items not in the textbook presently in use: a discussion of women's liberation; a moderate analysis of the emperor system, with suggestions of possible weaknesses in the system; and a suggestion that the past division between physical and intellectual labor has produced some of Japan's present basic social problems. The Ministry of Education gave as reason for rejection that the women's lib movement is a subject not included in the guidelines for the textbook. (Asahi Shimbun, Nov. 6, 1978)

i grasp for each moment  
each moment screaming  
at my silent emotion  
ah, false emotion  
deceiving silence  
forcibly buried in all  
synthetic surroundings  
but i feel you  
i feel you like  
the seemingly never ending  
moment wrapping my being  
i feel you like love  
wanting for its fulfillment  
why the delay  
why the delay  
you  
that peace and freedom  
growing futile in its womb.

-Magdalena Gajudo-  
Fernandez

(Magdalena, or "Nena," is the wife of painter Edgar Talusan-Fernandez. Both are now in Tokyo representing KAISAHAN ("Unity"), a group of painters whose works are to be shown Nov. 12-17 at Waseda Hoshien Gallery, Tokyo, on the last part of a successful Japan tour. (See JCAN #541 issue.) Mrs. Fernandez is a poet who writes both in English and in the national language. --Eds.)

And there are those

Who just a whit do over-celebrate

Their Christmas Eve

(Haiku: TAKEDA Tetsuzo)

